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# Return of the 3 R's: reduce, reuse, recycle



*-By Janice Gedlund, senior environmental analyst*

Since the first Earth Day in 1970, recycling became a way of life. However, the amount of stuff that we use and discard has grown tremendously. To turn things around, the City recently launched an aggressive recycling campaign. As Mayor Nickels wrote in an all-employee message: "Recycling is good; using less is better." Here are ways we're promoting the three R's at City Light:

**Reduce:** The Utility uses about 8 million sheets of copier paper per year. (An average office worker uses about 10,000 sheets per year.) One thing you can do to reduce paper use is to print and copy on both sides of the paper (duplex). The IT Help Desk (684-3766) can help set up your computer and printer for duplexing.

The environmental cost of paper waste is high, more than trees. Paper production requires energy and water and creates water and air pollution, solid waste, and greenhouse gases. The mayor's recent executive order on paper-waste prevention sets a goal of 15 percent reduction in paper use by 2006 and another 15 percent in 2006. An interdepartmental committee is working on technological, work habit, and institutional changes to reduce our paper use.

**Reuse:** In January, City Light's North and South Service Centers were selected to participate in "Recycle Smart," a free recycling assistance program offered by Seattle Public Utilities. Initial surveys found that City Light already has a strong recycling ethic, with the potential to significantly reduce waste-disposal costs by changing techniques for managing wood, meter glass, plastics and organic materials.

**Recycle:** The City purchased new recycling stations for City workplaces to make recycling even easier. Look for the new green and blue recycling bins in your work area.

Do you have ideas on how to reduce, reuse and recycle at City Light? Send them to Janice Gedlund (email [janice.gedlund@seattle.gov](mailto:janice.gedlund@seattle.gov) or 386-4583) and win a prize and certificate for ideas we publish. This month's tip: Check out the City's new Web site on paper waste prevention, <http://www.seattle.gov/papercuts/>.